



Rolfe Fort Godshalk

September 11, 2020

Rolfe Fort Godshalk, 80, died at her home on Sept. 11, 2020, with family at her side. She was diagnosed in July with a metastatic recurrence of lung cancer, two months after receiving a chainsaw for Mother's Day and 15 years after a lung lobectomy thwarted an initial bout with the disease.

Born in El Paso, TX on September 14, 1939, Rolfe was the daughter of June Saunders Files and Thomas Russell Files. She is survived by her husband of 62 years, Dave Godshalk, and children Merrell Foote (John) of Austin, TX; David Godshalk of Shippensburg, PA; June Newton (Andrew) of Seneca, SC; and Rolfe Olsen (Jim) of Columbia, SC. She is also survived by grandchildren Al and Cecily Foote, both of Austin, TX; James Newton of Portland, OR; Thomas Newton of Atlanta, GA; Georgia Olsen of Greenville, NC; James and David Olsen of Columbia, SC; sister Carolyn Files of Oak Ridge, LA; and many special nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her sister, Merrell Gregory.

Lover of reptiles, rehabber of injured songbirds, and rescuer of homeless dogs, Rolfe lived a nomadic life filled with adventures. During post-World War II reconstruction, she resided at U.S. Army bases in Germany, Greece, and Oklahoma, where her beloved stepfather, Colonel Al Fort, was stationed. When the family returned to El Paso, Rolfe served as captain of her high school tennis team, then enrolled at Texas Tech, where she pledged Pi Beta

Phi.

As a camp counselor in New Mexico, Rolfe met the love of her life, Dave, a soon-to-be-commissioned Army officer. Married after a whirlwind courtship, the young couple spent the next few years in Baltimore, MD and Fort Polk, LA. Following military life, Dave was hired by Sonoco Products Company, which took the couple first to Kent, OH, where, pregnant with her first child, Rolfe continued her higher education at Kent State University. While living in the California communities of Hacienda Heights and Hayward, the family grew to six, with Rolfe planning outings to Disneyland, Catalina Island, and Knott's Berry Farm.

At their next stop, Newport, TN, Rolfe edited the book "Newport" as a member of the town's Clifton Club and began her career as a craftswoman, transforming river rocks into whimsical painted critters. She then became a self-taught metal enamelist, adept at adding the tiniest of details to one-of-a-kind pieces of jewelry and colorful butterflies and dragons set on driftwood. Her work was exhibited at arts and crafts shows and galleries throughout the Southeast.

After moving to Hartsville, SC, Rolfe directed the city's Arts Alive festival for 10 years, coordinating elaborate fundraising balls that supported the event. Combining her creative and organizational talents, she established Rolfe's Gallery, a series of fine arts and crafts shows in North and South Carolina, one of which hosted a popular annual alligator cook-off featuring the finest chefs of Hilton Head Island.

She chaired Homes for Hartsville, a nonprofit organization that built houses in the 1990s for families in need. A master gardener, Rolfe served on the board of Kalmia Gardens and was a sustaining member of Hartsville's Spring Beauty Garden Club. As a horticulture assistant with Darlington County's Clemson

University Cooperative Extension in the early 2000s, Rolfe helped develop and lead local Master Gardener Program activities. More recently, she was a volunteer at Re-Tail Therapy Resale, the Darlington County Humane Society's thrift shop, and a mentor at North Hartsville Elementary School.

Rolfe served as contractor for her pondside home, landscaping the forested property with a unique variety of ornamental plants, trees, and edibles. In this magical wonderland, her grandchildren paddled canoes, roasted hot dogs, filmed movies, ate fresh-picked blueberries and asparagus, and counted toads on evening expeditions through the yard.

Her life-sized pair of knights in shining armor welcomed family to lively celebrations, where Rolfe's secret recipe for Caesar salad was in high demand and card games of Hearts were rowdy fun.

Rolfe traveled to destinations both ordinary and unusual, near and far, such as Pearl Fryar's Topiary Gardens in Bishopville, Riverbanks Zoo, the South Carolina Coast, Orlando theme parks, secluded Caribbean islands, the Arabian Peninsula, and romantic locales across Europe.

The Rev. Ashley Cheek of First Presbyterian Church of Hartsville will officiate a private interment of ashes at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church Memory Garden, a labor of love that Rolfe envisioned and brought to fruition. A memorial service will be held at First Presbyterian Church of Hartsville at a later date.

In lieu of flowers and to honor Rolfe's lifelong mission of helping those in need, donations may be made to the Darlington County Humane Society, and random acts of kindness given to anyone struggling to overcome adversity.

Tribute Wall

DO

“ We were so saddened to learn about Rolfe’s death, but have happy memories of those long ago craft shows. Rolfe was a gifted artist and enthusiastic supporter of the arts in all forms. We were blessed to have been a part of that era and to count her and Dave as friends for many years. What joy-filled people!

Please know that you are all in our hearts and prayers for peace and comfort.

With love and sympathy,

Donna and Bill Dicks

Banner Elk, NC

Donna - September 25, 2020 at 04:49 PM

EE

“ I had the pleasure of knowing Rolfe, she had her stepfather Al Fort placed at the Good Samaritan assisted living I worked at. She was a wonderful daughter. She was always pleasant and the minute you met her you loved her. She was kind hearted, patient and loyal. Her smile lit up any space she was in. I always admired her. I'm sad for your loss as it is very great. Sincerely Eunice Ellis.

Eunice Ellis - September 22, 2020 at 12:27 AM

DW

“ I was so sorry to see this notice in this morning's paper. I had not seen Rolfe for 64 years and had wondered many times where she had gone. My condolences to her family. She was a true lover of life. I think she loved everything that lived outside including ants. I remember she was playing a tennis match in one of our dual matches in High School and she was looking at a pole at the back of the court and her opponent hollered at her, "hay, what's the matter" Rolfe told her "hush, come here" The girl walked over to where she was standing and Rolfe showed here a magnificent Monarch butterfly resting on the fence. Her opponent was not impressed and laughed at her and ended up getting beat as Rolfe got mad and started concentrating on the game. She was a free spirit and always was a pleasure to be around. Thank you Rolfe for the good memories, Rest in Pece!
Love you,
Dan Wever
El Paso, Austin HS Class of 56

Dan Wever - September 20, 2020 at 11:35 AM

JN

Thanks you for sharing this precious memory! This definitely sounds like my mother.

June Newton - September 21, 2020 at 08:33 AM

SR

“ Sedell Lee Rowe lit a candle in memory of Rolfe Fort Godshalk



Sedell Lee Rowe - September 18, 2020 at 11:26 AM

KC

“ Katherine And Tom Crossan lit a candle in memory of Rolfe Fort Godshalk



Katherine and Tom Crossan - September 17, 2020 at 10:57 AM

MR

“ I enjoyed many occasions with Rolfe and Dave at Kalmia Gardens. This spring Rolfe raised baby wrens that were dropped at the Gardens and I am so happy she was able to experience that incredible joy from nature one last time. She always wore a piece of jewelry in the form of a lizard any time she came to Kalmia. She was a kindred spirit for me and I will miss her.

Fondly,
Mary Ridgeway

Mary R. Ridgeway - September 17, 2020 at 10:10 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Rolfe Fort Godshalk.



September 17, 2020 at 07:11 AM

GO

“ This was one truly remarkable lady who will be missed by so many who loved her. My thoughts and prayers go out to her wonderful family.

Grady O'Neal - September 16, 2020 at 09:42 PM

JM

“ JoAnn McKnight sent a virtual gift in memory of Rolfe Fort Godshalk



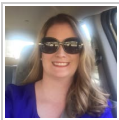
JoAnn McKnight - September 16, 2020 at 12:57 AM



“ Marissa Walters lit a candle in memory of Rolfe Fort Godshalk



Marissa Walters - September 14, 2020 at 08:34 AM



Your Sonoco Family is praying for all of you now and the days ahead.

Marissa Walters - September 14, 2020 at 08:35 AM

AO

“ Jimmy & Rolfe - I am sorry for the incredible loss you are experiencing. May the memories you have help sustain you through difficult days. Sending you peace and love.

Angie Olsen - September 13, 2020 at 01:39 PM

DO

“ She was an art force for Hartsville, SC. She made it happen, she smiled and everyone backed away, making a path for us to follow.

donna - September 12, 2020 at 07:55 PM

TW

Dave, I am so sorry for your loss. Rolfe was always so kind to me at the Sonoco Old Timers events. She was a source of encouragement to me. Marilyn and I are praying for you and your family. God Bless!

Travis and Marilyn Walters - September 13, 2020 at 01:29 PM